

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

BECKLEY DIVISION

DAVID CRUMBY,

Plaintiff,

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Defendant.

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CIVIL ACTION NO. 5:13-01832

PROPOSED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

On February 1, 2013, Plaintiff, acting *pro se* and incarcerated at FCI Beckley, located in Beckley, West Virginia, filed his letter-form Complaint in this matter claiming entitlement to relief pursuant to Bivens v. Six Unknown Federal Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 403 U.S. 388, 91 S.Ct. 1999, 24 L.Ed.2d 619(1971).¹ (Document No. 1.) Plaintiff appears to complain that prison staff violated his constitutional rights under the Eighth Amendment by failing to protect him from assaults by correctional officers and other inmates. (Id.) As relief, Plaintiff requests that the Court order that he be “held in protective custody until the BOP can transfer me to another facility” and “order both medical and psychological exam of Plaintiff at a medical facility.” (Id.)

By Order entered on February 4, 2013, the undersigned ordered that “(1) Plaintiff file the form Complaint specifying, among other things, the Defendant(s) in his Bivens action and stating

¹ A *Bivens* action is a judicially created damages remedy which is designed to vindicate violations of constitutional rights by federal actors. *See Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388, 395 -97, 91 S.Ct. 1999, 29 L.Ed.2d 619 (1971). An action for money damages may be brought against federal agents acting under the color of their authority for injuries caused by their unconstitutional conduct. Proof of causation between the official’s conduct and the alleged injury is necessary for there to be liability. A plaintiff asserting a claim under *Bivens* must show the violation of a valid constitutional right by a person acting under color of federal law.

his claims, and (2) Plaintiff either pay the \$350.00 filing fee or file the Application to Proceed *in Forma Pauperis* and other documents as required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1) and (2).” (Document No. 3.) The undersigned further notified Plaintiff as follows:

Failure of the Plaintiff to file a form Complaint and complete Application to Proceed *in forma pauperis* or Without Prepayment of Fees within thirty (30) days from the date of this Order will result in a recommendation of dismissal of this matter without prejudice Pursuant to Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 41.1 of the Local Rules of Civil Procedure for the Southern District of West Virginia.

(Id.) Plaintiff has not responded to the Court’s Order that was entered approximately nine months ago. Accordingly, the undersigned has determined that Plaintiff has failed to take any steps to prosecute this action, and therefore, Plaintiff’s letter-form Complaint in this case should be dismissed.

ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 41.1 of the Local Rules of Civil Procedure for the Southern District of West Virginia, District Courts possess the inherent power to dismiss an action for a *pro se* Plaintiff’s failure to prosecute *sua sponte*.² See Link v. Wabash Railroad Co., 370 U.S. 626, 629, 82 S.Ct. 1386, 1388, 8 L.Ed.2d 734 (1962).

Rule 41.1 of the Local Rules provides:

Dismissal of Actions. When it appears in any pending civil action that the principal issues have been adjudicated or have become moot, or that the parties have shown

² Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides:

(b) Involuntary Dismissal: Effect. If the plaintiff fails to prosecute or to comply with these rules or any order of court, a defendant may move to dismiss the action or any claim against it. Unless the dismissal order states otherwise, a dismissal under this subdivision (b) and any dismissal not under this rule - - except one for lack of jurisdiction, improper venue, or failure to join a party under Rule 19 - - operates as an adjudication on the merits.

no interest in further prosecution, the judicial officer may give notice to all counsel and unrepresented parties that the action will be dismissed 30 days after the date of the notice unless good cause for its retention on the docket is shown. In the absence of good cause shown within that period of time, the judicial officer may dismiss the action. The clerk shall transmit a copy of any order of dismissal to all counsel and unrepresented parties. This rule does not modify or affect provisions for dismissal of actions under FR Civ P 41 or any other authority.

Although the propriety of a dismissal “depends on the particular circumstances of the case,” in determining whether to dismiss a case involuntarily for want of prosecution, the District Court should consider the following four factors:

- (i) the degree of personal responsibility of the plaintiff;
- (ii) the amount of prejudice caused the defendant,
- (iii) the existence of a history of deliberately proceeding in a dilatory fashion, and
- (iv) the existence of a sanction less drastic than dismissal.

Ballard v. Carlson, 882 F.2d 93, 95 (4th Cir. 1989). In consideration of the first factor, the Court finds that the delays in this case are attributable solely to the Plaintiff as the Defendant has not been required to make an appearance in this action.³ Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, federal courts may authorize the commencement of an inmate’s civil action *in forma pauperis* upon the inmate’s filing an Application to so proceed, together with an Affidavit stating the nature of the action and Plaintiff’s belief that he is entitled to redress. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(a)(1) and (2)(2002). “Section 1915 is intended to allow qualified litigants to proceed without having to advance the fees and costs associated with litigation.” DeBlasio v. Gilmore, 315 F.3d 396, 398 (4th Cir. 2003). Plaintiff has not responded to the Court’s Order directing him either to pay the requisite \$350.00 filing fee in full or

³ The Bureau of Prisons’ Inmate Locator indicates that Plaintiff is currently incarcerated at USP Tucson, which is located in Tucson, Arizona. The undersigned notes that it is Plaintiff’s responsibility to provide the Court with a notice of change of address. *See* Rule 83.5 of the Local Rules of Civil Procedure (“A *pro se* party must advise the clerk promptly of any changes in name, address, and telephone number.”)

to file an Application to Proceed *in Forma Pauperis*. (Document No. 3.) Plaintiff, therefore, is the sole cause of the delays in this action. With respect to the second and third factors, the record is void of further evidence indicating that Plaintiff has a history of “deliberately proceeding in a dilatory fashion” or that the Defendant has been prejudiced by the delays in this case.

In consideration of the fourth factor, the Court acknowledges that a dismissal under either Rule 41(b) or Local Rule 41.1 is a severe sanction against Plaintiff that should not be invoked lightly. The particular circumstances of this case, however, do not warrant a lesser sanction. An assessment of fines, costs, or damages against Plaintiff would be futile in view of Plaintiff’s failure to pay the filing fee. Moreover, explicit warnings of dismissal would be ineffective in view of Plaintiff’s failure to respond to the undersigned’s Order entered approximately nine months ago advising Plaintiff that the undersigned would recommend dismissal if Plaintiff failed to complete and file the above forms (Document No. 3.). In consideration of all factors, the undersigned concludes that dismissal for failure to prosecute is warranted. Accordingly, the undersigned recommends that this action be dismissed without prejudice unless Plaintiff is able to show good cause for his failure to prosecute.

PROPOSAL AND RECOMMENDATION

The undersigned therefore hereby respectfully **PROPOSES** that the District Court confirm and accept the foregoing findings and **RECOMMENDS** that the District Court **DISMISS** this case without prejudice for failure to prosecute and remove this matter from the Court’s docket.

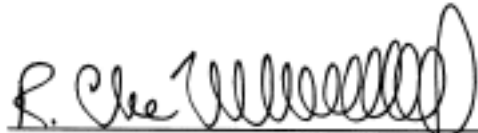
The Plaintiff is hereby notified that this “Proposed Findings and Recommendation” is hereby **FILED**, and a copy will be submitted to the Honorable United States District Judge Irene C. Berger. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 28, United States Code, Section 636(b)(1)(B), and Rule 6(d) and

72(b), Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the Plaintiff shall have seventeen (17) days (fourteen days, filing of objections and three days, mailing/service) from the date of filing of this Findings and Recommendation within which to file with the Clerk of this Court specific written objections identifying the portions of the Findings and Recommendation to which objection is made and the basis of such objection. Extension of this time period may be granted for good cause.

Failure to file written objections as set forth above shall constitute a waiver of *de novo* review by the District Court and a waiver of appellate review by the Circuit Court of Appeals. Snyder v. Ridenour, 889 F.2d 1363, 1366 (4th Cir. 1989); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 155 (1985); Wright v. Collins, 766 F.2d 841, 846 (4th Cir. 1985); United States v. Schronce, 727 F.2d 91, 94 (4th Cir. 1984). Copies of such objections shall be served on opposing parties, Judge Berger and this Magistrate Judge.

The Clerk is requested to send a copy of this Proposed Findings and Recommendation to Plaintiff, who is acting *pro se*,⁴ and transmit a copy to counsel of record.

Date: October 29, 2013.


R. Clarke VanDervort
United States Magistrate Judge

⁴ The Bureau of Prisons' Inmate Locator indicates that Plaintiff's current address is USP Tucson, P.O. Box 24550, Tucson, AZ 85734.